

## Freeway meeting tackles hot topics

[By Doug Murphy | AFN](#)

August 25, 2008 - 2:42PM

Unlike some past meeting of the South Mountain Citizens Advisory Team, where technical reports on the South Mountain Loop 202 can be dull, Thursday's meeting should be hot as a pistol.

The Arizona Department of Transportation and engineering firms hired to update the 1985 freeway plans will be discussing the impacts of cutting through South Mountain Park, what impact the 10-lane freeway may have on cultural issues and, if there is still time, they will begin to plan air quality discussions scheduled for the future.

Each topic is full of controversy.

- The Gila River Indian Community's tribal council passed a resolution declaring sacred ridges the freeway must cut through;
- An old initiative in Phoenix says that voters must approve any major changes to a municipal park, which some think may mean a city-wide vote before the Loop 202 could cut through the southwest corner of the park;
- Air quality along freeways hasn't been a consideration in the past, but the location of the freeway, near an air quality monitoring site, could mean construction and traffic results in high readings of particulates which in turn could reduce federal freeway funding and make clean air more difficult to attain.

The Citizens advisory team meets at 6 p.m., Aug. 28 at South Mountain Community College in the Student Union, 7050 South 24th Street.

The freeway was approved in 1985 to run from Interstate 10 in Ahwatukee Foothills, through the corner of South Mountain Park and north to reconnect with I-10.

Originally approved, but never funded, ADOT began updating the original plan in 2001 to take into account the rapid growth in Ahwatukee Foothills and on the west side of the project.

It is now estimated that the freeway will require the removal of 317 homes and cost more than last year's \$1.7 billion estimate.

A draft environmental impact statement is still being hashed out with the Gila River Indian Community and ADOT over cultural issues like the cuts in the ridges that the tribe opposes.